

Project allows glimpse into Air Force's past

LACKLAND AIR FORCE BASE, TEXAS — It's not often when someone has a chance to peer into the past, present and future at the same time. An Air Force historian has done just that after creating an online repository of basic training flight graduation photographs.

More than a year ago, Tech. Sgt. **Tracy English**, 37th Training Wing historian, Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, recognized that a part of the Air Force's history, photographs of basic training flights, was becoming lost. Sergeant English set out to trace the photography contractors who were hired to take each flight graduation photograph.

"It took several months of searching and going through the Better Business Bureau to finally trace down some of the original contractors," he said. "After spending all that time searching, we learned that the contractor policy was to only keep original photographs for 90 days before

throwing them away."

Back to square one, the historian took a different tact and established a Web site to announce the project and to solicit photographs. Twelve months later with roughly 2,000 BMT photos online, Sergeant English estimated only 117,000 photographs are left to find. Today, he says his two-member office is receiving a steady stream of submissions and working weekends to keep up.

The BMT Flight Photo Project was conceived as a way to help the Air Force and Airmen alike trace their roots, with the goal of collecting all of the approximately 119,000 basic training flight photographs from the inception of the Air Force in 1947 to present.

"We have people looking for some mementos of deceased parents, people who have lost all of their military records due to a fire or flood and just want to provide some form of evidence that they had served in the Air Force,"

Sergeant English said. "A lot of people had their military records destroyed during a military records warehouse fire in St. Louis in the 1970s. We've even had people trying to look up and meet with members from their training flight from 50 years ago."

Since the project started, Sergeant English stated his office receives roughly 120 pieces of mail and 600 e-mail messages every month with people asking for photographs or sending photos for the Web site. The collection includes all the bases that conducted basic training.

Pictures can be sent via e-mail to 37TRW.HO@Lackland.af.mil or mailed to 37TRW/HO, 1650 Carswell Avenue, Lackland AFB, TX 78236. Check out the collection at <http://www.lackland.af.mil/info/photos.asp>.

*Maj. Rich Curry
507th Air Refueling Wing
Public Affairs*

courtesy photo

